

Harbour high-rise breaks all the rules

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THE Premier, Kristina Kenelly, has warmly endorsed a plan to build one of Sydney's biggest hotels more than 100 metres out over the harbour, insisting it will not create a precedent other developers will seek to follow.

And the British architect behind the Barangaroo proposal, Richard Rogers, said he had "no reservations" about going where no private developer had been allowed to develop before.

The difficulties of achieving a good design made building over the water the best solution, said the architect known for a string of famous works including the Pompidou Centre in Paris.

"One of the problems we have had is this amazingly hard line - we call it the aircraft carrier. It had a function 100 years ago, it had a major function. Now it has no function," he said of the edge

of the old container wharves at East Darling Harbour.

"There's no reason why, in the 21st century, we should not build lightly - we have to tread very lightly - out into the water."

He said the hotel was an attempt "to reflect in a way the movement of the water. It's very three dimensional ... This is an

in the concept plan for the area, as well as the ban on building over water.

While hotel guests will enjoy better views of the Opera House from sitting the hotel on a 150-metre long pier, Ms Kenelly said constructing the wharf would improve access to the harbour for visitors to Barangaroo.

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Water.' Richard Rogers, architect

element where you'll be able to see a different view of the harbour."

At a function to release more details of Sydney's biggest urban redevelopment, Ms Kenelly praised the Lend Lease plan even though it breaches the height and density restrictions

Point) and said it was "a magnificent design".

While Lend Lease has provided some images of what the site might look like, actual designs will not be available until later in the year when development applications are submitted.

To encourage debate about the site, the Barangaroo Delivery Authority hosted a public meeting last night with Lord Rogers and the former prime minister, Paul Keating, arguing the merits of the scheme.

At the meeting Mr Keating praised the plan, calling it an "exclamation mark" that would make the western edge of the city centre remarkable. "Under the Lend Lease plan the harbour gains mightily," he said.

The chief executive of the authority, John Tabart, said the public would be able to inspect models and plans for the project for the next month.